

The title for today's message is: **Keep Fighting The War**

Paul said: Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.  
Amen

For thousands of years the sword was the key weapon for soldiers. They could use it as a defensive weapon to block the blows of the enemy.

But more importantly, it was their chief offensive weapon. With the sword they attacked and conquered.

I'm sure you have seen pictures of ancient warriors dressed in breast-plates and helmets, wielding a sword.

The Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul uses that picture to urge us to be fully equipped in our war. Okay what war?

What armor and weaponry do we use? Let's listen to God's answer to that question as we focus on the theme: Keep Fighting the War.

Now remember as the commander-in-chief of enemy forces, Satan schemes to fool you and me about the real war.

So often we think our enemy is that bully at school who calls us names or our parents who set down strict rules.

We think our enemy is that neighbor that keeps irritating us, that coworker or competitor who cheats to get ahead, or that relative whose words cut us down.

We think our enemy is the disease that wastes away our body's or the governmental regulations that can make our work difficult.

But listen to what our text for today says about the real war and the real enemy:

“Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities,

And against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”.

What does that mean? Our enemy is not the school bully, the inconsiderate neighbor, the brash relative, or the malicious coworker or competitor.

They can't separate us from our Savior. Rather our enemy is the sinful attitude against them that Satan cultivates in our hearts.

It's the simmering anger that continues day after day. It's the desire to get even. It's the temptation to give back as good as we get.

Likewise, our enemy isn't strict parents or governmental regulation. Rather it is the rebellious attitude that kicks against the authorities God has placed over us.

Our enemy isn't the disease but the temptation to worry or blame God or to give up.

As destructive and deadly as these sinful attitudes can be in us, we haven't mentioned Satan's most deadliest weapons: Doubt.

Although doubt can be good when we are evaluating the claims of other sinful, human beings, doubt has no place in our relationship with God.

Doubting what God says and promises is the opposite of believing it. Doubt is the opposite of faith.

In our text, Paul talks about the shield of faith "with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one."

But when we doubt it replaces faith, and we are left completely defenseless.

If we doubt what God says about sin, it's much easier for Satan to lead us into sins like anger, rebellion, and worry.

Then once he has caught us in sin, Satan casts doubts on God's promise of forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

As he builds in us doubts about Jesus, he tempts us to trust our own efforts to be good enough.

To trust human advancements to take away our worries, to trust the amusements of life to distract us from our problems.

And if we realize how hopeless these things are, then Satan drives us to despair, to give up.

As long as doubt separates you and me from the promises of Jesus, we have no hope, no salvation, only death and hell.

The antidote for doubt is God's promises. How does God administer this antidote? He brings you the Good News through the Bible, Baptism, and through the Lord's Supper.

These are the only three sources through which God brings his promises, which drive out doubt.

Even praying does not drive out doubt or build faith unless in prayer we are taking to heart God's promises.

Keep fighting the war against the real enemy, keep fighting against Satan's doubts.

Now, we've already talked a little about God's weaponry. Paul said; "Stand firm with the belt of truth buckled around your waist".

What does this mean, we can stand against Satan's doubts when the truth, revealed in God's Word, encircles us like a belt.

"Stand firm with the breastplate of righteousness in place". When you were baptized, your sinful life was covered with Jesus' perfect, righteous life.

No accusation of Satan's can penetrate Jesus' righteousness. And Jesus has covered you with his breastplate of righteousness.

"Stand firm with you feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace".

In the Lord's Supper, Jesus brings peace to your guilty heart. What He gives you is His real body and blood.

He does this so that you know that he really sacrificed himself on the cross for you to bring you peace with God.

This peace makes you and me ready to serve him in love, wherever he may direct our feet to go.

Paul also talked about the shield of faith. Now a shield is only as good as the material it's made out of, and faith is only as good as the promise it knows and trusts.

Look a faith built on human hopes is like a paper shield, which Satan's flaming arrows easily penetrate and destroy.

But faith that holds on to God's promises is like a shield made of impenetrable steel.

"Take the helmet of salvation" Paul says. Because apart from God's promises there is no salvation.

Finally Paul said; “Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”. Since the sword was the key weapon, Paul explicitly connects the sword with the word of God.

Now be careful not to damage the Spirit’s sword. Hold on to the true teaching of God’s Word. Hold on to the sword of the Spirit.

Finally Paul talks about prayer. Now notice that prayer is not described as part of the full armor of God.

No! Prayer is different than the Bible, Baptism, or the Lord’s Supper. God speaks to us through the Bible, Baptism and the Lord Supper.

We speak to God through prayer. Without the God’s Word coming to us first, prayer is worthless and meaningless.

Yet when God’s Word lives in our hearts, when we study the Bible, remember our Baptism, and receive the Lord’s Supper, then prayer to our Lord comes from our hearts.

Every Christian can pray. You don’t need a special course to learn some secret about prayer.

As we fight the war against Satan and his weapon of doubt, we humble turn to God in prayer.

As we put on the armor of God by studying his word, the Holy Spirit fills us with the desire to pray.

What do we pray for in our warfare against Satan? We pray for whatever is on our heart as the Holy Spirit directs us through God's Word.

"Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests".

But especially remember to pray for our fellow believers who also wage war against Satan.

The sword was the key weapon in ancient times. The sword of the Spirit, God's Word, is our key weapon as well.

The sword of the Spirit comes to you through the Bible, through Baptism, and through the Lord's Supper.

Pray that the Spirit's sword is not damaged by false teaching. Keep fighting the war against Satan and his doubts. Keep fighting that war using the sword of the Spirit.

Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.